

Interview with Capt. Sinclair M. Harris Commodore Amphibious Squadron Four

Commodore Harris talks about COMPHIBRON Four and the 24th MEU and their role in Trident Warrior 2005

Commander, Amphibious Squadron Four is responsible for the tactical employment of the ships from the Iwo Jima Strike Group. Under Commander, Second Fleet these ships participated in TW05: USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), USS Nashville (LPD 13), USS Philippine Sea (CG 58), USS Bulkeley (DDG 84), USS Cole (DDG 67) with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit - Special Operations Capable (MEU-SOC). Allied partners from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom participated in Trident Warrior 2005 (TW05) in port and underway in the Virginia Capes Operating Area. Allied ships included HMS Iron Duke (pierside Portsmouth, England), HMCS Fredericton, HMCS Montreal, HMNZS Te mana and HMNZS Waka (operating in coastal areas off New Zealand and a shore-based mock-up in Sydney, Australia to simulate HMAS Perth).

CHIPS: COMPHIBRON Four has a challenging schedule. Is it hard on the crew to participate in an experiment like TW05?

CDRE Harris: It does add more to the plate of all the Sailors in the Iwo Strike Group given the many competing requirements from disaster relief efforts in support of Joint Task Force Katrina, to completion of basic and intermediate training events to prepare for deployment, but the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) team have been working well with the ship's force to make the installation process very smooth.



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Michael Saleh, operations officer, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (left) and Capt. Sinclair Harris, commodore, Amphibious Squadron Four at a Trident Warrior 2005 planning conference Oct. 18, 2005.

The crew likes the new technologies, some of the new technologies have been onboard six months or more. It's also a good chance for the crew to train.

CHIPS: There are multiple players in the TW05 looking at 120 objectives. What are some of your objectives?

CDRE Harris: Our main goal is to support the testing of the new FORCENet systems by operating as much as possible in the way we will during normal operations and allowing the observers to glean all the data possible. This is the first time that the Iwo Jima Strike Group has sailed together, so we look at this as Group Sail 'Zero' and will concentrate on three objectives on a not to interfere basis with TW05 objectives: (1) Ring out communications issues between units and begin to build cohesion between the ships that will make up the Iwo Jima Strike Group; (2) Maximize the amount of Marine aircraft flight deck qualification possible; and (3) Continue individual unit level training progress.

CHIPS: How well did you work with the 24th MEU?

CDRE Harris: The missions that we used to test the FORCENet systems in TW05 are ones that commonly call for the MEU and am-

phibious squadron to work in a supporting-supported relationship. Marine Air and Special Ops units would perform missions that we plan together with the MEU command element on the Iwo. Thus, the MEU-PHIBRON team will generate a demand signal for information that we need for mission planning and execution.

CHIPS: How were communications with the AUSCANNZUKUS (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and United States) navies during TW05?

CDRE Harris: I knew things were going well with the network when I saw the same situ-

ational awareness picture on HMCS Montreal that was on the battlewatch screens on Iwo Jima.

CHIPS: How important is it to be able to work with the coalition?

CDRE Harris: It's vital to deploy with the coalition. You want to go to sea with the people that you would go to war with, especially our closest allies. You want to make sure that you have a common ops picture and mutual situational awareness. For communications we used CENTRIXS (Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System) and the CNF domain for chat, e-mail and Internet browsing.

CHIPS: How does PHIBRON Four work with the 2nd Fleet staff?

CDRE Harris: We execute the missions and provide detailed plans as directed by the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC) who is Commander, Second Fleet.

After approval of our concept of operations (CONOPS), we keep the JFMCC apprised of how the operation is proceeding. In TW05, Royal Navy Commodore Steve Cleary, Deputy Director Second Fleet, was the JFMCC.

CHIPS